



Washington FARS*



Roadside Survey of Driver Impairment

Nearly half of Washington's traffic fatalities involve impairment

July 2014

Issue 6

Part I

Washington Roadside Survey of Driver Impairment

During the early summer of 2014, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), a prominent national, non-profit research organization, conducted a roadside survey in six Washington counties to determine how many people are driving with drugs or alcohol (or the combination of drugs and alcohol) in their systems. The PIRE research looks at some 75 different legal, illegal and over-the-counter drugs that potentially impair driving.

Because Washington is one of only two states that have legalized recreational marijuana, it is very important the survey be conducted here. It will provide a snapshot of driver drug and alcohol use before the marijuana stores open in the summer of 2014. PIRE also plans to study the processes involved with implementing recreational marijuana regulations.

The PIRE Research Project in Washington

During the month of June 2014 PIRE Researchers collected data in the following six counties: King, Kitsap, Snohomish, Whatcom, Yakima and Spokane. In each of those counties five data collection locations will be identified.

PIRE researchers positioned themselves at busy intersections with signs announcing a voluntary survey is taking place. Once people agreed to participate, they were guided into a coned-off area in a

nearby parking lot. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. Drivers were offered up to \$60 to participate in the entire survey, which took about 20 minutes. PIRE researchers have had no trouble recruiting participants. However, to assure a truly random selection of participants, PIRE does not accept those who show up specifically to participate in the survey.

PIRE contracts with local law enforcement to provide security for the crewmembers and assist with site selection. Local officers are familiar with their own roadways and traffic patterns, and are best equipped to advise PIRE on the workable locations for the surveys.

Impaired Driver Protocol

Local law enforcement, working on contract for PIRE, also help with impaired drivers who drive into the survey operations, which occasionally happens, especially at night. PIRE has a strict protocol for dealing with impaired drivers. They are offered choices: a hotel room, a taxi ride home, a tow truck to haul their vehicle home—all better choices than driving impaired or being arrested for DUI. If they refuse to make a choice, an officer will step in and review the choices. Over 30,000 drivers have been surveyed since 1996 by PIRE; not one has been issued a DUI.

The PIRE surveys were preceded by a public information campaign by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to remind motorists that the survey is voluntary and anonymous.

See Page 3, PIRE Part 2

Medical Examiners & Coroners:

Key Partners in Fatal Crash Data Collection

Medical examiners and coroners are behind-the-scenes experts that contribute a great deal to the collection of accurate fatal crash data. And we all know that accurate fatal crash data is critical to planning the most effective use of traffic safety funds for maximum results.

Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) staff in every state collects hundreds of details relating to fatal crashes: the road, roadway conditions, weather, time of day, vehicle information, driver information, and a zillion other data elements relating to the fatality. This information is all added to the national fatality data base and analyzed exhaustively.

Tracking accurate fatality numbers is important for many reasons;

this gives us information about fatality trends and may affect funding.

FARS analysts must determine if each death that occurs in relation to a crash is actually traffic related. From time to time a driver may experience a medical episode and die prior to crashing or die within 30 days but of causes unrelated to the crash.

Medical examiners and coroners are the final source for that elusive information. When official documents fail to provide conclusive information, FARS staff contacts these fine professionals for clarification, and they are unfailingly gracious and helpful with our inquiries.

Tribal Traffic Safety

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) Centennial Accord mission is to work proactively with Tribal governments statewide to reduce deaths and serious injuries resulting from traffic crashes on Tribal lands. Traffic crashes remain a leading cause of death and serious injury for Native Americans.

The traffic fatality rate of Native Americans in Washington state is higher than that of the state's general population. Even worse—the gap is widening. Native American fatalities compared to the general population:

- ◇ 2.4 times higher in the early 2000's
- ◇ 3.3 times higher per 2010 Target Zero® data
- ◇ 3.9 times higher per 2013 Target Zero data

Looking at data from 2003-2012, we see that the traffic fatality rates of Native Americans are higher than the general population in several areas:

- ◇ Unbelted fatality rate is 7.2 times higher
- ◇ Pedestrian fatality rate is 5.3 times higher
- ◇ Impaired-driver-involved fatality rate is 5 times higher
- ◇ Speeding fatality rate is 4.5 times higher

For info on the Centennial Accord:

[http://www.goia.wa.gov/government-to-government/data/centennial accord.htm](http://www.goia.wa.gov/government-to-government/data/centennial%20accord.htm)

It is codified in the RCWs:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.376&full=true>

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: MJ Haught, WTSC Program Manager, (360-725-9879) mjhaught@wtsc.wa.gov

The (Green) Elephant in the Room

On November 6, 2012 the voters of Washington State passed Initiative 502, which legalizes the recreational use of marijuana.

- ⇒ It's now legal in Washington for people over age 21 to possess up to one ounce of dried marijuana or up to one pound of a THC-infused solid product or 72 ounces of THC-infused liquid.
- ⇒ It's still illegal in any amount for anyone under 21.
- ⇒ It's still illegal to drive impaired (*driving high IS DUI*).

The eyes of the nation are on Colorado and Washington as they negotiate all the ramifications of this law. Many other states have legalized medical marijuana and are considering legalizing recreational use; others have or will soon address legalizing medical marijuana.

Washington's traffic safety community are collecting information on drugged driving, providing increased training to law enforcement on identifying drugged drivers, developing standard screening methods for drug-testing labs and encouraging other states to adopt "per se" laws and providing education to communities and professionals.

It is established that marijuana affects memory, judgment and perception. Drugged driving laws lag behind alcohol-related laws because of the limitations in current technology for determining drug impairment. Some drugs linger in the body for periods of days or weeks after ingestion. With cannabis, there is no agreed-upon limit for which impairment can be reliably demonstrated, placing the responsibility for recognizing cannabis impairment on law enforcement officers.

PIRE Part II

The Impaired Driving Problem

Although progress has been made over the years, impaired driving is still the number one cause of fatal collisions in Washington, resulting in the deaths of about 200 people each year. Gains in the battle against alcohol impaired driving could be easily undermined with increases in drug impaired driving. A statistically valid research study of driver drug and alcohol use will provide valuable information for policy makers who determine how limited government funds should be invested.

National Roadside Survey:	1973	1986	1996	2007
No alcohol	63.9%	74.1%	83.1%	87.6%
Over .05 BAC	13.6%	8.4%	7.7%	4.5%
Over .08 BAC	7.5%	5.4%	4.3%	2.2%
Total tested + for alcohol	35.9%	26.0%	16.9%	12.4%

The National Roadside Survey has been conducted about once a decade since the 1970's. The latest national data collection effort took place in 2013. A state level data collection effort took place in 2012 in California. Here's a look at the drivers doing these surveys who tested positive for alcohol.

In 2007, PIRE added saliva and blood sampling to test for a range of drugs. Here's what they found.

	Day-time	Night-time	Most commonly detected drugs:	
No drugs	89%	85.6%	Marijuana	8.6%
Drugs – legal, illegal and over-the-counter	11%	16.3%	Cocaine	3.9%
			Methamphetamine	1.3%

A video that shows what the research will look like is available at this web address:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-H2_b8ht_U&feature=youtu.be)

[H2_b8ht_U&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-H2_b8ht_U&feature=youtu.be)

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jonna VanDyk, WTSC Program Manager,
jvandyk@wtsc.wa.gov (360-725-9885), or

Shelly Baldwin, WTSC Program Manager,
sbaldwin@wtsc.wa.gov (360-725-9889)

For additional information about the PIRE Roadside Survey: www.wtsc.wa.gov and www.pire.org.

Fatal Crash Reporting 2014 Qtrs. 1 & 2

~ Hall of Fame ~

Top Reporting Investigator:



LINDA MACK,

TRAFFIC DETECTIVE

EDMONDS PD

*Detective Mack reported a fatal crash
within 8 hours and 9 minutes*

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The following agencies submitted fatal crash  
Reports within 4 days per RCW 46.52.030.

#### Top Reporting PD's:

**Auburn, Edmonds, Everett, Kent, Lacey,  
Lakewood, Longview, Lynnwood, Pasco,  
Puyallup, Richland, Seattle, Spokane, Walla  
Walla**

#### Top Reporting SO's:

**Benton, Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Grant, King,  
Kitsap, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Pierce,  
Snohomish, Stevens, Thurston**

**&**

**WSP**

**THANK YOU!**

#### PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK:

This newsletter is intended to open discussion between  
investigators, crash data crunchers, and other  
members of the traffic safety community.

Please let us know what topics are of interest to you.

Guest contributors are welcome!

Contact Mimi Nickerson ([mnickerson@wtsc.wa.gov](mailto:mnickerson@wtsc.wa.gov))

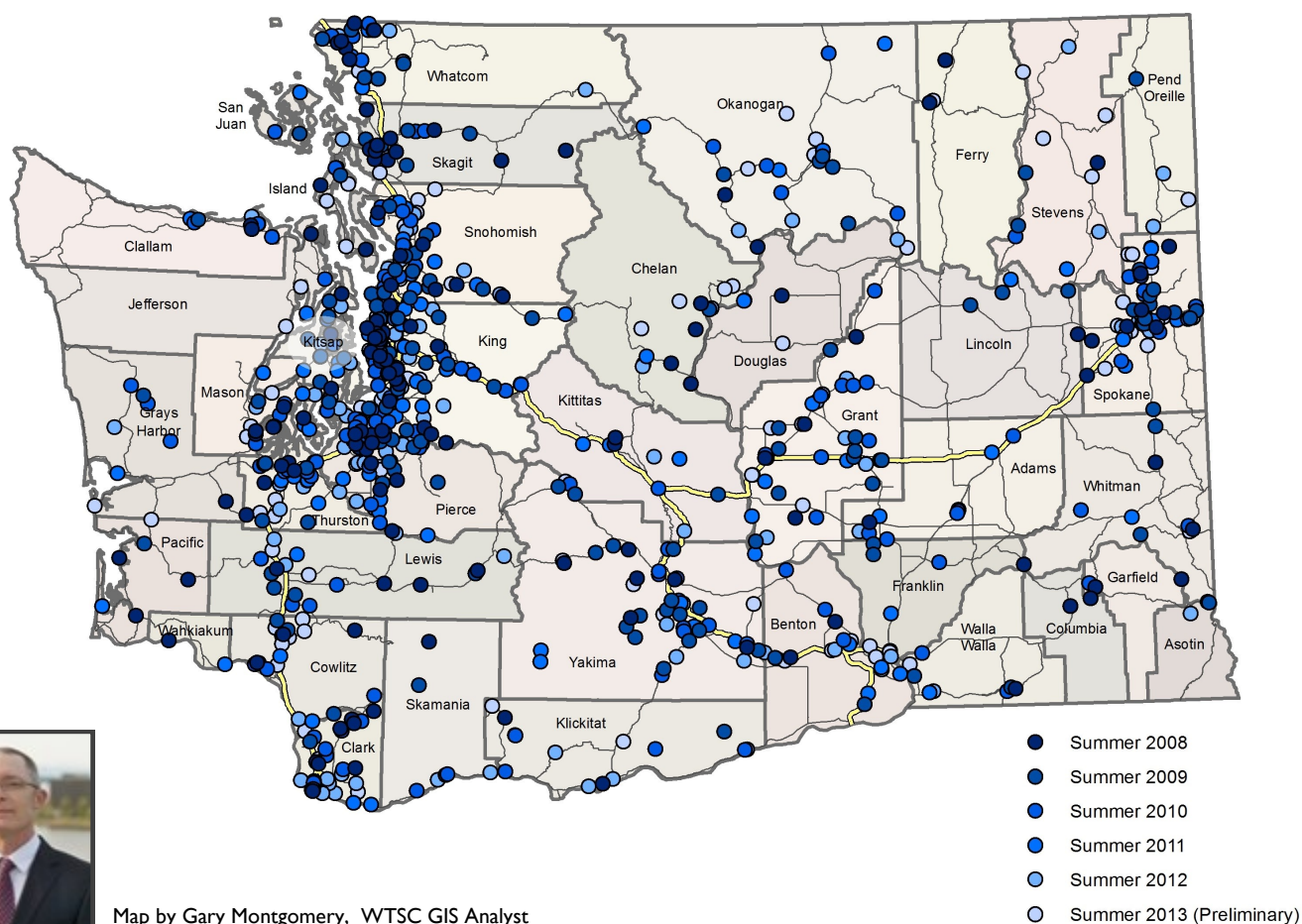
or call (360) 725-9892.

# The 100 DAYS OF .....



Rumor has it that summer is finally here, the warm and sunny days that lend themselves to outdoor activities. Also known as the “100 days of summer,” the days between Memorial Day and Labor Day, this period may offer more opportunities for fun but, sadly, the fatality rate for young drivers tends to increase.

*Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for young people 16—25 in Washington.* These drivers have the highest rate of crashes, speeding, impairment and distraction of any driver age group in the state. Even though fatalities involving young drivers continue to decrease yearly and continue trending toward our “zero by 2030” target, we remind our young drivers to remember the Target Zero priorities: don’t drive impaired; wear seat-belts; keep their speed legal; and don’t text and drive.





621 8th Avenue SE, Suite 409  
P. O. Box 40944  
Olympia, WA 98504-0944

## Research and Data Division (RADD)

**Staci Hoff**, Ph.D., Manager

shoff@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9894

**Dick Doane**, Research Investigator

ddoane@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9894

**Gary Montgomery**, GIS Specialist

gmontgomery@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9877

**Joyce Fan**, Ph.D. Data Integration Specialist

jfan@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9875

**Terry Ponton**, FARS\* Research Analyst

tponton@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9891

**Mimi Nickerson**, FARS\* Research Analyst

mnickerson@wtsc.wa.gov (360) 725-9892

\*Fatality Analysis Reporting System

*Coming soon . . .*

*To a Neighborhood Near YOU!*



- ⇒ Local law enforcement agencies around the state and the Washington State Patrol will be participating in two high-visibility enforcement campaigns this summer focusing on impaired drivers.
- ⇒ “Summer Kick-Off” enforcement will take place  
**July 1-13**
- ⇒ “August Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” will be from  
**August 15–September 1.**
- ⇒ Both campaigns will be accompanied by publicity efforts warning drivers of the extra patrols, including messaging around marijuana impairment and the risk of “Drive High, Get a DUI.”

## A NOTE TO CRASH INVESTIGATORS:

Thank you for your stellar work in so many areas of fatal crash reporting, including:

- Submitting prompt & accurate reports
- Responding to request for more information
- Noting supplemental information in the crash report
- Noting GPS coordinates when available

Special thanks to agencies that are using the new press memo form. Press memos provide standard information that help smooth the data collection and analysis process. Complete data helps us identify specific traffic safety issues and plan for funding.